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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

30 January 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

FROM : [REDACTED]
National Intelligence Officer for China-EAP

SUBJECT : Warning Assessment for China-East Asia
Pacific

1. Attached are the assessments prepared on the basis of the Community views expressed at the China and East Asia Pacific warning meetings. These memorandums have not been coordinated with the participants but are being circulated among them.

2. You or your representative are cordially invited to attend the February warning meeting for China-East Asia Pacific in Room 7 E 62, CIA Headquarters, at 1400 on Wednesday, 20 February. We will address the China situation first; China Internal, followed by Sino-Soviet and the Indochina situation; the East Asian situation will then be addressed. Representatives should adjust their times of attendance accordingly. Please provide the name of your representative [REDACTED] by COB 19 February.

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Attachments
As Stated

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State - Mr. Robert Drexler
Air Force - Maj. Wally Astor
Army - Col. Jack Churchill
Navy - Cdr. Robert Cyboron
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Treasury - Mr. Arthur Long
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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

31 January 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA : Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM :
National Intelligence Officer for China-EAP

SUBJECT : Warning Assessment: China

The following items were considered by the Community Representatives at the meeting on 21 January:

1. Sino-Soviet Affairs

No increase in tensions along the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Mongolian borders had been observed; order of battle on both sides remained essentially unchanged, with no special preparations perceived. While there had been a step-up in Soviet aerial surveillance of the border areas, the Chinese had not reacted. The Soviets had undertaken a rotation of troops in Mongolia which involved a larger number of flights than on previous occasions, but no particular significance was attributed to this development.

Impact of the Afghanistan situation on Sino-Soviet relations was noted in the fact that the Chinese had deferred at least until later this year the resumption of the Sino-Soviet talks on mutual relationships. (The annual talks on navigation along the Amur and Ussuri rivers were to resume on 5 February, however.) The Chinese press had strongly attacked the Soviet involvement, and Huang Hua in Pakistan had said that Chinese would assist both Pakistan and the Afghan resistance forces. Analysts agreed that Chinese aid to Afghan dissidents would not be direct but would go via Pakistan. In any event, the route through the Watkhan corridor was probably snowbound this time of year. No increase in Chinese air strength at fields nearest Afghanistan had been seen.

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Relating Afghanistan to the Sino-Soviet border situation, the Soviets had included the Transbaikal MR among nine such districts which had been called on to furnish troops to replace reservists called up for the move into Afghanistan. It was possible that the Far Eastern MR would also be called upon to furnish troops. ☐

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Further relating to Afghanistan developments, it was observed that the Soviets had attacked Huang Hua's visit to Pakistan, which occurred just after Secretary Brown's visit to China, as evidence of Sino-US "collusion." The presence in China of a Pakistani military mission was commented upon; the mission's purpose was reportedly to check on the availability of Chinese weaponry, including MIG-21's. (Analysts questioned the willingness of the Chinese to provide MIG-21 aircraft given the limited number in the Chinese AOB.) Sixteen Chinese MIG-19's (F-6's) had been delivered to Pakistan in January.

Finally, analysts called attention to Chinese concern over the role of India, with consequent attention to the need for improving Sino-Indian relations. ☐

2. Indochina Situation

There was considerable discussion of the apparent failure of the Vietnamese offensive against Kampuchean resistance forces in the Thai-Kampuchean border area to materialize. A Vietnamese troop strength of seven to nine divisions in this general area was reported, but the strategy of the Pol Pot forces evidently was to avoid combat and move away from the borders, thus making Vietnamese operations difficult. It was further possible that the Vietnamese had reached the conclusion that there was no unity among the various Kampuchean groups and hence no real threat ☐

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Another possibility addressed was that Vietnam's perceptions of the international scene had a bearing on the situation, e.g., the possible involvement of the US and the Chinese if Vietnamese operations spilled over into Thailand and stirred up Thai resistance. Vietnam and Moscow may well have heeded US warnings sent to both. China was perhaps already taking credit for pinning the Vietnamese down along the Sino-Vietnam border. Vietnam may in addition have made an assessment of the strength of Thai and ASEAN reactions. In this regard, some adjustments in the Thai/ASEAN position toward accommodating Vietnam had been observed, which could have generated a degree of Vietnamese response. ☐

One point of view held that the Soviets may have influenced Vietnam to cool the situation in the light of Soviet moves in Afghanistan. Admiral Gorshikov was in Hanoi on 22 December, the date of the Vietnamese offensive supposedly was to begin (Vietnamese Army Day), and could have

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passed along a message to the Vietnamese. Soviet pressure could have been exerted through the logistical support being given to Vietnam by the USSR; some effects on Vietnam of diminished Soviet logistical support had already been observed in the wake of Thai curtailment of Soviet overflights to Vietnam. ☐

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Nevertheless, it was emphasized that Soviet military assistance to Vietnam was continuing, most notably in the arrival in that country of Fitter ground support aircraft (the SU-7, not the SU-17). Conceivably what we were witnessing now was just a temporary hiatus in Vietnamese operations, with the anticipated offensive still to come. The fact that Vietnam was still spread out and pinned down in Kampuchea, with consequent drain on its manpower and economic resources, could hardly be pleasing to the Vietnamese. ☐

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3. Chinese Internal Situation

Analysts commented on the apparent development of a conservative trend in China's handling of its internal affairs, as marked by Deng Xiaoping's 17 January speech (which criticized inter alia "big character posters"). Deng himself might have come under pressure from colleagues concerned with public order and discipline to back away from some of the more liberal positions he had taken earlier on individual rights. However, Deng's tactics had been to press forward on an issue, move back when resistance was encountered, and then make a new thrust. He was now pressing cadre reform from within the Party, and may have felt it expedient to take a softer line on other questions while handling the very sensitive matter of cadre reform. ☐

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New faces were reported as appearing at the Party Center, representing leaders identified with Deng Xiaoping. One such was Zhao Ziyang (brought in from Xichuan), who could be slated for a senior position in the Party Secretariat. It was speculated that if such were the case, Deng was possibly seeking to create in the Secretariat an alternate center of power to the Politburo. Leadership trends were likely to become clearer later in 1980, when the 5th Plenum of the 11th Party Congress was expected, followed by the 12th Party Congress. A final evaluation of the Cultural Revolution could be expected from these meetings as well as indications of leadership changes. ☐

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No serious threats to Party unity, national stability, and the personal position of Deng Xiaoping were believed to exist at this time. It was noted that military modernization had not become

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a contentious issue, and that the military had been surprisingly
quiet in the face of the lower order of priority assigned to
modernization of the PLA. ☐

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